

CLAIMS

1. A computer-implemented communication method for message transmitting and message receiving users having related health characteristics, comprising:

the message receiving user defining at a receiving user computer personal health message receiving criteria for determining messages to be received from other users who conform to the personal health message receiving criteria, the personal health message receiving criteria including personal or health characteristics relating to the message receiving user;

the message transmitting user defining at a transmitting user computer a message and personal health message transmitting criteria for directing the message to other users whose personal health message receiving criteria conform to the personal health message transmitting criteria, the personal health message transmitting criteria including personal or health characteristics relating to the message transmitting user; and

transmitting the message to any message receiving user with personal health message receiving criteria that conform to the personal health message transmitting criteria.

2. The method of claim 1 in which the message is transmitted to the message receiving user with personal health message receiving criteria that conform to the personal health message transmitting criteria without disclosing the identity of the message receiving user to the message transmitting user.

3. The method of claim 1 in which personal health message receiving criteria conform to personal health message transmitting criteria only if the personal health message receiving criteria include all of the personal health message transmitting criteria.

4. The method of claim 1 in which personal health message receiving criteria conform to personal health message transmitting criteria if the personal health message receiving criteria include at least selected ones of the personal health message transmitting criteria.

5. The method of claim 1 further comprising for the message receiving user at the receiving user computer a receiving user interface that allows the receiving user to specify message receiving criteria that include plural health conditions relating to the message receiving user from among predefined health conditions.

6. The method of claim 5 in which the receiving user interface further allows the receiving user to specify message receiving criteria that include plural health conditions that relate to the message receiving user and include one or more user-defined health conditions, the method including correlating the user-defined health conditions with a health terminology thesaurus having concept unique identifiers that correspond to and provide uniform characterizations of the user-defined health conditions.

7. The method of claim 1 further comprising for the message transmitting user at the transmitting user computer a transmitting user interface that allows the transmitting user to specify message receiving criteria that include plural health conditions relating to the message transmitting user from among predefined health conditions.

8. The method of claim 7 in which the transmitting user interface further allows the transmitting user to specify message transmitting criteria that include plural health conditions that relate to the message transmitting user and include one or more user-defined health conditions, the method including correlating the user-defined health conditions with a health terminology thesaurus.

9. The method of claim 1 further comprising obtaining from each user personal health-related information about the user, the health-related information including one or more health-related terms that each corresponds to a health-related concept; and correlating with a health terminology thesaurus each of the one or more health-related terms with a single concept unique identifier that uniquely identifies a corresponding health-related concept, each concept unique identifier having associated with it one or more terms corresponding to a common health-related concept, ones of the terms being lay medical terms and not clinical medical terms.

10. The method of claim 9 in which computer implementation of the method employs a client computer and a server computer that are interconnected by a computer network the method further comprising:

providing at the client computer a user interface with which each user provides the personal health-related information about the user, the health-related information being defined by one or more health-related terms;

transmitting the personal health-related information about the user over the computer network to the server computer, the server computer storing the health terminology thesaurus; and

correlating each of the one or more health-related terms with a single concept unique identifier at the server computer.

11. The method of claim 10 in which the computer network includes the Internet.

12. In a computer-readable medium, computer software for message transmitting and message receiving between users having related health characteristics, comprising:

software for allowing the message receiving user to define at a receiving user computer personal health message receiving criteria for determining messages to be received from other users who conform to the personal health message receiving criteria, the personal health message receiving criteria including personal or health characteristics relating to the message receiving user;

software for allowing the message transmitting user to define at a transmitting user computer a message and personal health message transmitting criteria for directing the message to other users whose personal health message receiving criteria conform to the personal health message transmitting criteria, the personal health message transmitting criteria including personal or health characteristics relating to the message transmitting user; and

software for transmitting the message to any message receiving user with a personal health message receiving criteria that conform to the personal health message transmitting criteria.

13. The medium of claim 12 further comprising software for transmitting the message to the message receiving user with personal health message receiving criteria that conform to the personal health message transmitting criteria without disclosing the identity of the message receiving user to the message transmitting user.

14. The medium of claim 12 in which personal health message receiving criteria conform to personal health message transmitting criteria only if the personal health message receiving criteria include all of the personal health message transmitting criteria.

15. The medium of claim 12 in which personal health message receiving criteria conform to personal health message transmitting criteria if the personal health message receiving criteria include at least selected ones of the personal health message transmitting criteria.

16. The medium of claim 12 further comprising software for providing to the message receiving user at the receiving user computer a receiving user interface that allows the receiving user to specify message receiving criteria that include plural health conditions relating to the message receiving user from among predefined health conditions.

17. The medium of claim 16 in which the software for the receiving user interface further allows the receiving user to specify message receiving criteria that include plural health conditions that relate to the message receiving user and include one or more and user-defined health conditions, the medium including correlating the user-defined health conditions with a health terminology thesaurus having concept unique identifiers that correspond to and provide uniform characterizations of the user-defined health conditions.

18. The medium of claim 12 further comprising software for providing to the message transmitting user at the transmitting user computer a transmitting user interface that allows the transmitting user to specify message receiving criteria that include plural health conditions relating to the message transmitting user from among predefined health conditions.

19. The medium of claim 18 in which the software for the transmitting user interface further allows the transmitting user to specify message transmitting criteria that include plural health conditions that relate to the message transmitting user and include one or more and user-defined health conditions, the medium including correlating the user-defined health conditions with a health terminology thesaurus.

20. The medium of claim 12 further comprising software for obtaining from each user personal health-related information about the user, the health-related information including one or more health-related terms that each corresponds to a health-related concept; and

software for correlating with a health terminology thesaurus each of the one or more health-related terms with a single concept unique identifier that uniquely identifies a corresponding health-related concept, each concept unique identifier having associated with it one or more terms corresponding to a common health related concept, ones of the terms being lay medical terms and not clinical medical terms.

21. The medium of claim 20 in which computer implementation of the medium employs a client computer and a server computer that are interconnected by a computer

network, the medium further comprising:

software for providing at the client computer a user interface with which each user provides the personal health-related information about the user, the health-related information being defined by one or more health-related terms;

software for transmitting the personal health-related information about the user over the computer network to the server computer, the server computer storing the health terminology thesaurus; and

software for correlating each of the one or more health-related terms with a single concept unique identifier at the server computer.

22. The medium of claim 21 in which the computer network includes the Internet.

23. In a computer-readable medium, a data structure comprising:
personal health message receiving criteria associated with receiving users for determining messages to be received from other users who conform to the personal health message receiving criteria, the personal health message receiving criteria including personal or health characteristics relating to the receiving users; and

personal health message transmitting criteria associated with transmitting users for directing a selected message to other users whose personal health message receiving criteria conform to the personal health message transmitting criteria, the personal health message transmitting criteria including personal or health characteristics relating to the transmitting users.

24. The data structure of claim 23 in which one or more of the personal health message receiving criteria and the personal health message transmitting criteria are correlated with concept unique identifiers that uniquely identify health-related characteristics.

25. The data structure of claim 24 in which each concept unique identifier includes numeric characters.

26. The data structure of claim 24 in which each concept unique identifier includes alpha-numeric characters.

27. A personal health messaging graphical user interface rendered on a computer display screen, comprising:

plural predefined health condition controls that correspond to different health conditions and are separately selectable by a user as relating to the user, the predefined health condition controls corresponding to messaging criteria for identifying users between whom personal health messages are directed.

28. The user interface of claim 27 configured as a receiving user interface in which the predefined health condition controls correspond to messaging criteria for identifying users from whom personal health messages are to be received.

29. The user interface of claim 27 configured as a transmitting user interface in which the predefined health condition controls correspond to messaging criteria for identifying users to whom personal health messages are to be transmitted.

30. The user interface of claim 27 further comprising a user-defined health condition control in which a user may enter one or more health condition terms that correspond to messaging criteria for identifying users between whom personal health messages are directed.

31. The user interface of claim 30 configured as a receiving user interface in which the predefined health condition controls and the user-defined health condition control correspond to messaging criteria for identifying users from whom personal health messages are to be received.

32. The user interface of claim 30 configured as a transmitting user interface in which the predefined health condition controls and the user-defined health condition control correspond to messaging criteria for identifying users to whom personal health messages are to be transmitted.